

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM THE WATCHUNG MAYOR KEITH BALLA

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG Continues to be on High Alert *COVID-19 Update - March 15*

This letter contains the critical information for the websites to obtain information on a regular basis. In addition the outdoor sign at Borough Hall will direct residents to the appropriate web information. This public health emergency is rapidly evolving and we want to ensure we provide our residents with timely and factual updates.

Watchung Borough Officials have been actively planning and coordinating the response for the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. The Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Carolyn Solon, Business Administrator James Damato, Mayor Keith Balla and Councilman Ron Jubin have been in communications daily and have been participating in daily conference calls conducted by Somerset County Freeholder Director, Shanel Y. Robinson, along with all of the Mayors throughout Somerset County and obtaining briefings from various officials. We are all closely monitoring this situation.

Watchung's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is led by Carolyn Solon, OEM Coordinator, who has been preparing plans and conducting meetings with emergency responders of Watchung, as well as continually updating the Somerset County OEM.

The most recent meeting was attended by Councilman Dr. Ron Jubin, Councilman Pietro Martino, Police Chief Cina, Assistant Fire Chief Pivnichny, Denise Wilson Watchung Rescue Squad and Wilson Memorial Church, Jeiner Betancourt Watchung Rescue Squad, James Damato Business Administrator, Kevin Sumner Health Director Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission, Carolyn Solon OEM Coordinator, Maria Fittipaldi, Administrative Assistant and Keith Balla, Mayor.

Each department discussed their action plans regarding protocols and procedures to protect the emergency responders and any needs for equipment and supplies and continued operations to protect our residents, businesses and visitors. Discussions focused on how to best protect our community and the communications to our residents to slow the spread of the virus.

As for the Borough Hall operations, James Damato presented his plans of modified operations to best protect the employees and residents. This information will be communicated directly by the Administrator to all employees and posted on the website. www.watchungnj.gov

The Borough of Watchung also has a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) which includes representatives from our stakeholder groups and organizations to assist with the LEPC. Members include our OEM, elected officials, law enforcement officials, fire service officials, emergency medical personnel, health officials, environmental consultants, hospitals, local business leaders. The LEPC will provide information to our residents and answer questions from our community. Updates will be continually provided on the Borough website www.watchungnj.gov

Watchung's Board of Health is part of the Middle-Brook Regional Health Commission and is following up on all reports and questions regarding Coronavirus in our community and works collaboratively with local health officers across the County, including the County Health Department. The Governor and State Health Commissioner declared a public health emergency in New Jersey. This action grants certain authorities to the State Health Commissioner and solidifies the coordination of the public health response throughout the County. The Watchung Board of Health is still responsible for activities within Watchung; however, since diseases do not respect borders, coordination and communication is essential for a successful response.

Councilman Dr. Ron Jubin (who is a renowned virologist who has a great understanding of how these virus spread), urges all Watchung residents to wash their hands, maintain proper hygiene and avoid contact with others outside of their homes especially avoiding those who are sick in order to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus. He closely monitors the medical data and will work with our state, county and local board of health to provide additional updates when appropriate.

Because of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 outbreak, certain community actions to keep people healthy, reduce exposure to COVID-19 may be implemented to slow the spread of the disease. All Watchung schools are closed. Most churches and houses of worship have closed. Most businesses if possible have employees working from home to avoid contact with others to reduce the spread.

These actions include maintaining or increasing the distance between people, promoting common-sense health habits, and encouraging the proper cleaning and sanitizing of surfaces. These interventions are among the best ways to control a virus when vaccines are not available. Consequently, the Town Hall for speed reduction will be postponed and the Easter egg hunt will be canceled to prevent people from further contact to best protect our community. While the schools are

closed and residents are working from home we highly recommend that everyone refrain from community gatherings and other activities where people other than your immediate family are present. Parents and children should avoid park equipment and sports that put them in contact with others.

I must stress that the purpose of the school, government, Municipal court, library and business closings is so individuals refrain from meeting with persons outside of their household and limit the community spread. Everyone should continue to take the recommended precautions and wash their hands, avoid close contact with others and use proper cleaning methods with cleaning solutions that limit the spread of the virus. We strongly recommend that residents use online options to conduct business with government agencies. Building inspections will be limited and by appointment only. We are requesting that all contractors call before you visit Borough Hall.

Additional daily health precautions that can prevent the spread of the Coronavirus and other diseases:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds each time.
- When soap and water are not available, the public should use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Do not reuse tissues after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched frequently.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Limit contact with large groups

To stay informed, residents can visit the following:

NJ hotline for COVID-19 info:

1-800-222-1222

NJ Health COVID-19

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>

CDC COVID-19

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?fbclid=IwAR2pnUkXH9DkLSOQAQccltovBHlkzd3M0wYtzfvit8THk-Yc-LHqOmf-kig>

Somerset County COVID-19

<https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-health-safety/health-department/services/disease-prevention/novel-coronavirus-2019-2641>

NJ Health: Isolation vs. Quarantine

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID-19-IsolationVsQuarantine.pdf>

coronavirus@co.somerset.nj.us

www.coronavirus.gov, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,
www.njgov/health State Health Department
www.who.int. World Health Organization

PLEASE CHECK BACK FREQUENTLY FOR IMPORTANT UPDATES

www.watchungnj.gov Borough of Watchung website

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I respectfully request that everyone work together and be considerate and kind as we work through this unprecedented pandemic. We are working with our local, county and state Boards of Health and seek to provide the factual information to best protect all of our citizens and alleviate any panic and stress from misinformation.

This is truly a challenge and stress on all of our lives and I sincerely hope everyone will work together to help and encourage all as we work through this.

I will provide updates as we are updated with new information or procedures.

Thank you for all of your help in serving and following best practices for protecting all in our community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith S. Balla". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor Keith Balla